

Soddo language

Soddo (autonym *kəstane* "Christian"; formerly called *Aymälläl* in Western sources, after a particular dialect of it) is a Gurage language spoken by a quarter million people in southeastern Ethiopia. It is an Ethiopian Semitic language of the Northern Gurage subfamily. Its native speakers, the Soddo Gurage people (Kistane), live predominantly in the Soddo district of the Gurage Zone.

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Grammar

Noun

As in most Ethiopian languages, noun qualifiers generally follow the noun.

The definite article is expressed by the suffix *-i*, e.g.: *goš* "boy" > *goš-i* "the boy"; *ätit* "sister" > *ätiti* "the sister"; *bayyočč* "children" > *bayyočč-i*. If the noun ends in *-a* or *-ä*, it normally loses this vowel when *-i* is suffixed: *angačča* "cat" > *angačč-i* "the cat". A noun ending in *-i* usually stays the same: *abi* "(the) father, proprietor". A noun ending in *-e*, *-o*, *-u* adds a *y* before the suffix: *ge* "house" > *geyi* "the house"; *wälläho* "neighbor" > *wälläho yi* "the neighbor". If the noun has a qualifier, the article is used with the first element: *maläk' ge* "big house" > *maläk'-i ge* "the big house"; *yä-šum-i ge* "the house of the official" (lit. "of-official-the house"); *yä-mät't'-i məss* "the man who came" (lit. "who-came-the man".)

There is no real indefinite article, though indefiniteness can be expressed by preposing the word *attə* or *k'una*, meaning "one".

Soddo	
Kəstane	
Native to	Ethiopia
Region	Gurage Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
Native speakers	(260,000 cited 1994 census) ^[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none">Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">South<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ethiopic<ul style="list-style-type: none">South<ul style="list-style-type: none">n-group<ul style="list-style-type: none">Soddo
Dialects	Soddo Goggot (Dobi)
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	gru
Glottolog	kist1241 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kist1241) ^[2]

Nouns have two genders, masculine and feminine, which affect verb concord.

Nouns which are definite objects (direct or indirect) are both marked with the prefix *yä-* or *nä-*: e.g. *yä-ge yⁱ ažžo* "he saw the house"; *yä-zämmih^wan abännət* "he gave it to his brother" (lit. "to-his-brother he-gave-him"). Direct objects may additionally be marked by adding the object suffix pronouns to the verb: e.g. *yabiddi täšakkunnət* "I asked my father" (lit. "my-father-obj. I-asked-him").

A possessed noun is marked by the prefix *yä-*, and the possessor precedes the possessed: *yä-šum-i ge* "the house of the official" (lit. "of-official-the house"). If the possessed noun has a preposition prefixed to it, this *yä-* is omitted: *babiddi färöz* rather than **bä-yä-abiddi färöz* for "on my father's horse".

Pronoun

Personal pronoun

English	Standalone form	Possessive suffix (consonant-final nouns)	Possessive suffix (vowel-final nouns)
I	<i>ädi</i>	<i>-əddi</i>	<i>-ddi</i>
you (m. sg.)	<i>dähä</i>	<i>-dä</i>	<i>-dä</i>
you (f. sg.)	<i>däš</i>	<i>-däš</i>	<i>-däš</i>
he	<i>k^wa</i>	<i>-äw, -k^wan</i>	<i>-w, -h^wan</i>
she	<i>k^ya</i>	<i>-ki</i>	<i>-hi</i>
we	<i>əñña</i>	<i>-əñña</i>	<i>-ña</i>
you (m. pl.)	<i>dähəm</i>	<i>-dähəm</i>	<i>-dähəm</i>
you (f. pl.)	<i>dähma</i>	<i>-dähma</i>	<i>-dähma</i>
they (m.)	<i>kənnäm</i>	<i>-kənnäm</i>	<i>-hənnäm</i>
they (f.)	<i>kənnäma</i>	<i>-kənnäm</i>	<i>-hənnäm</i>

Possessives can also be formed by simply adding *yä-* to the standalone pronouns, e.g.: *yädähəm t'əb* "your clan".

Reflexive pronouns are formed by *äras-*, *gubba-*, *k'um-* plus the possessive suffixes, e.g. *ädi äras-əddi mät'afi t'afkunnət* "I myself wrote the book".

Demonstrative pronoun

Proximal: *zi* "this, these"; *zini* "this one". E.g.: *zi məss* "this man", *zi məšt* "this woman", *zi säbočč* "these men".

Distal: *za* "that, those, that one, those ones"; *zani* "that one there". E.g. *tä-za məss goy mät't'ahi* "I came with that man".

Interrogative pronoun

- *ma* "who?" (*man* before the copula): *man mät't'a?* "who came?"

- *yäma* "whose?"
- *mən* "what?"; *yämən* "why?"
- *yitta, yittat* "which?" E.g. *yitta bayy mät't'am* "which child came?"
- *yittani* "which one?"

Indefinite pronoun

- (*yähonä*) *säb* "someone, somebody"
- *mannəm* (*säb*) "any(one)" ("no one" with negative verb)
- *attəm* "any" ("no one, nothing" with negative verb); *attəmu* "no one" (as pronoun)
- *lela* (*säb*) "other"
- *yäk'irrä k'äy* "other" (lit. "remaining thing")
- *attə* "a certain"
- *läyyu* "different"
- *k'una, zam, zəč'ə* "same"
- *äbälo* (f. *äbälit*) "so-and-so"
- *zihom* "such"

kulləm = "all" (placed before or after the noun); *kulləm-u, bä-mollaw* = "whole". *yät'oma* = "only, alone". "Each, every" is expressed by noun reduplication.

Copula and existential verbs

The copula (positive and negative) is irregular in the present tense:

English	be	not be
I am	<i>näw(h)</i>	<i>ädäbukk</i>
you (m. sg.) are	<i>nähä</i>	<i>ädäbəkkä</i>
you (f. sg.) are	<i>näš</i>	<i>ädäbəčč</i>
he is	<i>-n, -ən</i> (after a consonant)	<i>ädäbəll</i>
she is	<i>na</i>	<i>ädäbəlla</i>
we are	<i>nänä</i>	<i>ädäbəllänä</i>
you (m. pl.) are	<i>nähəm</i>	<i>ädäbəkkəm</i>
you (f. pl.) are	<i>nähma</i>	<i>ädäbəkkəma</i>
they (m.) are	<i>näm</i>	<i>ädäbəlläm</i>
they (f.) are	<i>näma</i>	<i>ädäbəäma</i>

Example: *zämmidi nähä* "you are my brother".

The past tense ("he was", etc.) is expressed by the verb *näbbär* conjugated regularly in the perfect; "he was not" etc. is with *annäbär*. The future tense is expressed by the imperfect of *hono*: *yəhonu* "he will be", etc. The negative future tense is likewise expressed by *tihon*. The present copula in subordinate clauses is expressed by the subordinate perfect of *honä*, e.g.: *däffär yähonä tädi-goy yalfu* "he who is courageous will go with me".

"It is he", etc. can be expressed by adding an element *-tt* between the pronoun and the copula: e.g. *k "a-ttə-n* "it is he".

The existential verb "be at", "exist" in the present is:

English	be at/there	not be at/there
I am	<i>yinähi</i>	<i>yellähu</i>
you (m. sg.) are	<i>yinəho</i>	<i>yellähä</i>
you (f. sg.) are	<i>yinäšin</i>	<i>yelläš</i>
he is	<i>yino</i>	<i>yellä</i>
she is	<i>yinätti</i>	<i>yellät</i>
we are	<i>yinäno</i>	<i>yellänä</i>
you (m. pl.) are	<i>yinähmun</i>	<i>yellähəm</i>
you (f. pl.) are	<i>yinähman</i>	<i>yellähma</i>
they (m.) are	<i>yināmun</i>	<i>yelləm</i>
they (f.) are	<i>yināman</i>	<i>yelləma</i>

In the past and future, it is expressed just like the copula, with *näbbärä* and *honä*. In subordinate clauses the present is expressed with *-allä* conjugated in the perfect (negative *-lellä*), e.g.: *bämeda yalləmi säbočč araš nām* "the people who are in the field are farmers".

The possessive verb "he has" etc. is expressed with the existential verb *yino* "it is" (agreeing with the object possessed) plus object suffix pronouns (i.e. "it is to him" etc.)

Verbs

A Soddo verb may have anywhere from one to four consonants, or may be a compound with *balo* "say" (e.g. *bək'k' balo* "appear".) In the former case, they fall into three "conjugations" differing in their vowels and in gemination of the imperfect, illustrated for a three-consonant verb:

- *säbbäro*, imperfect *yəsäbru* ("break")
- *tikkälo*, imperfect *yətikkəlu*
- *č'affäro*, imperfect *yəč'affəru*

Derived stems can be formed in several ways:

- reduplicative: e.g. *gäddälo* "kill" > *gədaddälo*. This form has a wide variety of meanings, mostly intensifying the verb in some way.
- passive/reflexive/intransitive *tä-* prefix: e.g. *käffälo* "pay" > *tä-käffälo* "be paid". A reciprocal action can be expressed by this prefix attached to a transitive verb with the vowel *a* after the first radical, or a reduplicative form, e.g. *tä-gäddäl-mun* or *tä-gdaddäl-mun* "they killed each other".
- causative or transitive of intransitive verbs *a-*: e.g. *säkkäro* "be drunk" > *a-säkkäro* "get someone drunk"; *näddädo* "burn (intr.)" > *a-näddädo* "burn (tr.)".
- causative of transitive or passive verbs *at-* (+ *-i-*): e.g. *käddäno* "cover" > *at-kiddäno* "cause to cover" or "cause to be covered". Added to the *-a-* form, it expresses reciprocity and adjutative (helping): *atgaddälo* "cause to kill one other" or help to kill".

- Some verbs are formed with initial *ən-* or *tän-*; the only derived stem from these is the *a-* stem, with *a-* replacing *ə-* or *tä-*. E.g. *ənkrättäto* "be bent" > *ankrättäto* "bend".

There are two tenses/aspects, perfective (past) and imperfective (non-past); each has distinct forms for main versus subordinate clauses, and positive versus negative. There are also distinct jussive, imperative, and impersonal forms.

Conjugations

Perfect

English	main clause	subordinate clause	relative clause	subordinate with -m
I measured	<i>säffär-ki</i>	<i>säffär-k^w</i>	<i>yä-säffär-k-i</i>	<i>säffär-kum</i>
you (m. sg.) measured	<i>säffär-ko</i>	<i>säffär-kä</i>	<i>yä-säffär-k-i</i>	<i>säffär-käm</i>
you (f. sg.) measured	<i>säffär-šin</i>	<i>säffär-š</i>	<i>yä-säffär-š-i</i>	<i>säffär-šəm</i>
he measured	<i>säffär-o</i>	<i>säffär-ä</i>	<i>yä-säffär-i</i>	<i>säffär-äm</i>
she measured	<i>säffär-ätti</i>	<i>säffär-ät</i>	<i>yä-säffär-ätt-i</i>	<i>säffär-ättəm</i>
we measured	<i>säffär-no</i>	<i>säffär-nä</i>	<i>yä-säffär-n-i</i>	<i>säffär-näm</i>
you (m. pl.) measured	<i>säffär-kəmun</i>	<i>säffär-kəmu</i>	<i>yä-säffär-kəm-i</i>	<i>säffär-kəmun</i>
you (f. pl.) measured	<i>säffär-kəman</i>	<i>säffär-kəma</i>	<i>yä-säffär-kəma-yi</i>	<i>säffär-kəmam</i>
they (m.) measured	<i>säffär-mun</i>	<i>säffär-m</i>	<i>yä-säffär-m-i</i>	<i>säffär-mum</i>
they (f.) measured	<i>säffär-man</i>	<i>säffär-ma</i>	<i>yä-säffär-ma-yi</i>	<i>säffär-mam</i>

The form with suffixed *-m* is used in subordinate clauses to connect verbs not otherwise connected, in a way analogous to Japanese *-te*; it can be translated as "and", as a gerund, or as a resultative. The perfect in *-m* followed by *näbbär* forms the pluperfect.

The negative perfect is formed by prefixing *al-*, with vowel change; for the conjugations mentioned above, the resulting forms are *al-säffärä*, *al-täkkälä*, and *al-č'afärä*.

Examples: *ge aräššo* "he built a house"; *banätäw k'ən awänna-m bämida tonnaw* "having put butter on the top of his head, he sat outside".

Imperfect

English	main clause	subordinate clause
I advance	<i>äbädru</i>	<i>äbädər</i>
you (m. sg.) advance	<i>təbädru</i>	<i>təbädər</i>
you (f. sg.) advance	<i>təbädri</i>	<i>təb^yədər</i>
he advances	<i>yəbädru</i>	<i>yəbädər</i>
she advances	<i>təbädri</i>	<i>təbädər</i>
we advance	<i>(ən)nəbädru</i>	<i>(ən)nəbädər</i>
you (m. pl.) advance	<i>təbädrəmun</i>	<i>təbädrəm</i>

you (f. pl.) advance	<i>təbādrəman təbādrəma</i>
they (m.) advance	<i>yəbādrəmun yəbādrəm</i>
they (f.) advance	<i>yəbādrəman yəbādrəma</i>

Like the perfect, the subordinate forms can take the suffix *-m* to express a series of non-past actions. This can be combined with *nābbār* to express a habitual past action.

Examples: *ahoññ gäbäya nalḥu* "today we shall go to the market"; *yəgädəl məss* "the man who kills"; *mas tənäsa-m yibara wawt'a tək'ärsi* "she picks up the sleeping mats and begins to remove the dung."

It can be augmented by *-ən*, with no obvious change in meaning.

English	negative main clause	negative subordinate clause
I do not begin	<i>täk'ärs</i>	<i>annək'ärs</i>
you (m. sg.) do not begin	<i>təttək'ärs</i>	<i>attək'ärs</i>
you (f. sg.) do not begin	<i>təttək'erš</i>	<i>attək'erš</i>
he does not begin	<i>tik'ärs</i>	<i>ayk'ärs</i>
she does not begin	<i>təttək'ärs</i>	<i>attək'ärs</i>
we do not begin	<i>tənnək'ärs</i>	<i>annək'ärs</i>
you (m. pl.) begin	<i>təttək'ärsəm</i>	<i>attək'ärsəm</i>
you (f. pl.) advance	<i>təttək'ärsəma</i>	<i>attək'ärsəma</i>
they (m.) advance	<i>tik'ärsəm</i>	<i>ayk'ärsəm</i>
they (f.) advance	<i>tik'ärsəma</i>	<i>ayk'ärsəma</i>

Examples: *ahoññ yəmət'a timäsəl* "it does not seem that he will come today"; *ädah "an t-aykäfəl alläfo* "he left without paying his debt".

Jussive and Imperative

person	conjugation A	conjugation B	conjugation C
1st sg.	<i>näsfər</i>	<i>näšäkkət</i>	<i>nəgalb</i>
2nd m. sg.	<i>səfär</i>	<i>šäkkət</i>	<i>galb</i>
2nd f. sg.	<i>səfer</i>	<i>šäkkič</i>	<i>gal^uib</i>
3rd m. sg.	<i>yesfər, yäsfər</i>	<i>yešäkkət</i>	<i>yegalb</i>
3rd f. sg.	<i>tesfər</i>	<i>tešäkkət</i>	<i>tegalb</i>
1st pl.	<i>(ən)nəsfär</i>	<i>nəšäkkət</i>	<i>nəgalb</i>
2nd m. pl.	<i>səfärəm</i>	<i>šäkkətəm</i>	<i>galbəm</i>
2nd f. pl.	<i>səfärma</i>	<i>šäkkətma</i>	<i>galbəma</i>
3rd m. pl.	<i>yesfärəm</i>	<i>yešäkkətəm</i>	<i>yegalbəm</i>
3rd f. pl.	<i>yesfärma</i>	<i>yešäkkətma</i>	<i>yegalbəma</i>

These are negated by the prefix *ay-*: *ayəsfär*, *ayšäkkət*, *aygalb*. The 2nd person forms then change to conform to the others: *attəsfär*, *attəsfer*, *attəsfärəm*, *attəsfärma*.

E.g.: *yä-wäzälawan-hom yewsəd* "let him take according to his work"; *yäsäb waga attəlgäd* "don't touch someone's property"; *ärəf-əm tona* "rest and sit down" (sit down quietly).

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External links

- Christian recordings in Soddo (<http://globalrecordings.net/program/C19540>) in Global Recordings (<http://globalrecordings.net/>) website.
 - World Atlas of Language Structures information on Soddo (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_code_sod)
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